PLANNING REF : 251143
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 1 White Cottages
: Upper Culham
: RG10 8NP
SUBMITTED BY : Miss Camilla James
DATE SUBMITTED : 12/06/2025

COMMENTS:
My objection to planning application 251143 is based on several concerns:
- Noise and disturbance
- Traffic
- Loss of privacy
- Loss of Outlook
- Planning Policies
- Loss of light
- Impact on local amenities
- Environmental impact
- Appearance of the area

- Overshadowing and loss of daylight
- Impact on area of special character and green belt
- Design and layout:
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THE LAND
Upper Culham Farm has a long history of agriculture dating back to the 13th Century. Throughout the 20th Century, it hosted the Henley Farm and Country Shows. A personal recollection from the 1960s describes the farm as a site of intensive agricultural activity, with the
construction of pig sties and a corn drier by a wealthy landowner, Mr
Berens.

In the 21st Century, Upper Culham Farm continues to be a working farm with some diversified activities with the business park and the
equine use has been incidental to the farming of the land. The area is part of the Remenham Arable Chalk Plateau, designated as Green Belt and an Area of Special Character, with potential inclusion in the Chilterns AONB.
Landscape and Policy Implications
Summary
Impact on Local Amenities
- Various factors, including environmental impact, appearance, overshadowing, and loss of daylight, are considered.
The Land

- Upper Culham Farm has a history of agriculture dating back to the 13th century.
- In the 20th century, it hosted the Henley Farm and Country Shows.
- The farm has diversified in the 21st century but remains primarily agricultural, with incidental equine use.

- It is part of the Remenham Arable Chalk Plateau, designated as Green Belt and an Area of Special Character, with potential inclusion in the Chilterns AONB.
Land and Policy
- The Wokingham policy paper emphasizes preserving the Chilterns Valued Landscape.

- The Glover Review and Chilterns AONB Management Plan advocate for boundary reviews and expansion of protected areas.
- Significant changes to the landscape, especially vertical structures, could negatively impact natural beauty and accessibility.

- Policies emphasize the need to preserve Upper Culham Farm's special character and surrounding landscape.

Any change, particularly a change that is so sweeping that it will override the natural features and introduce vertical elements (both natural and manmade) that are at odds with the plateau will take away this small area of rarity and will affect the access and enjoyment of the majority of people who live or visit here.

I also note that while there is the description of only the hamlet of Upper Culham being in the stated special protected area, my understanding is that the whole of the land is in the Remenham Arable Chalk Plateau and the overriding policy objectives of landscape and property being inextricably entwined and to follow the Wokingham Landscape Strategy:
To maintain the landscape character . . . the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape and sense of place created by the combination of dramatic landform, parklands and tracts of woodland and pockets of open pasture. The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are the extensive woodland,
including ancient woodland. There is an opportunity to restore and strengthen the hedgerow network and to manage, and increase the extent of, the ecologically valuable chalk grassland. In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern and historic built form of the hamlets, farms and manors.

A polo estate would impact on the picturesque and long views, remove the sense of remoteness, allow modern development and infrastructure and impact on the dark skies and the recreational enjoyment from those using the Chiltern Way as well as the residents and the wider community.

Currently, the plateau is well maintained thanks to the current landowner of the land on the opposite side to this application from Kentons Lane to the edge of Crazies Hill, and the land in this application has been farmed well by the farmer maintaining the landscape quality. The scenic quality is rare, (I believe it is the only such plateau in Wokingham) and therefore not just rare but unique to the area: it represents the natural formation and is not built upon or been subjected to much manmade additions (save for additions to the property and curtilage) and removing this would create a loss of outlook for walkers and riders who use the footpath and restricted byway and single track roads giving a sense of escape from urbanity to be replaced by something oppressive and overbearing in this context. It is a small part of land that has not fallen victim to development but continued to help feed the nation through the agricultural usage which in turn has preserved wildlife.

However, a manicured polo estate will protect the area of special character or enhance it or integrate with it - this is a large scale manmade and commercial activity that changes the use of the land and puts in manmade urbanised features such as tarmac roads and field

divisions through planting where none were there before and is the ntithesis of what is currently there and what is on the other side of Culham Road. The development does not benefit the flora, fauna or the local residents or those who escape to this area to enjoy its rural nature. It changes the features of the Plateau and removes its status as a special area and its rarity will be lost through this change.

The area is about its topography but it is also about what covers that topography that is important.

LOSS OF PRIVACY, LOSS OF OUTLOOK, LOSS OF LIGHT

In regard to the 'rurality being preserved' there is a big difference between living right by the rurality of equine land use being horses grazing and hacking compared to living right by a full on polo
establishment where mallet and ball work is practiced six days a week, matches are played on a regular basis, horses run at full speed and, being a team sport, there will inevitably be shouted instructions and discussions and the attendance of spectators. This is like saying that living next to the local rec ground with some goalposts for a
kickabout is the same as living next to the Madjeski (Select Car Leasing) stadium. It is for good reason that many polo grounds on a similar scale as this are assimilated into estates of much larger landholdings where they can be placed in areas away from residential properties and create less impact rather than this one which takes up the whole of a landholding and is surrounded by residential properties.

In regard to the visibility for 1-4 White Cottages, the visual amenity would be fully not partially altered as the upper windows look over the central and southern part of the site ie the exercise ground, the practice grounds, the polo field, the irrigation lake and pump house and the roads throughout the land. This is clearly more than a partial alteration - it is the complete loss of outlook.

The White Cottages see the whole of the area from the upper floors and can see all the way to the A4130 and does not just take in the exercise track and polo field but the whole site. Given the owner's stated aim of running a high goal polo team and the proposed stabling for a large amount of horses plus staff accommodation, the addition of estate roads, car and truck parking and an additional building in the form of a pump house that is the same size as a studio flat (the
overview states it will have a footprint of 15sqm but on the plans it is stated as 8000 x 4000 ie 32 sqm)- all of which are visible from these properties - it will be like looking on to a commercial development.

I believe there are around 11 houses in Upper Culham on Upper Culham Lane which are not part of the applicant's ownership, 2 of which are Grade II listed and of which 1-4 White cottages make up over 30% of the total. Adding in the other properties highlighted in the planning documents, this means that between 50%-60% of the residential properties in the hamlet will be visually impacted by this development to some degree. This in a hamlet that is currently

protected. In addition, properties in Middle Culham, Cockpole Green and Crazies Hill could also be affected. Their conclusion is incorrect the loss of
outlook and visual amenity will affect at least half the residents, if not more, to some degree. Any loss will be adverse in nature.

I also believe from walking in this area for many years that the residents of Cockpole Green (particularly Ashley Hill Place) as well as Crazies Hill Primary School and the properties on that side of the village including Clay Court and Crazies Hall may also have the outlook changed and a loss of visual amenity.

The destruction of the visual amenity and the loss of outlook is far greater than that which is being put forward and for a far greater number of residents than has been stated.

All my bedrooms and bathroom face on to the land within the application. The land is currently one large area with hedgerows limited to the periphery and the farm tracks lying invisibly among the crops. Therefore, not only will the whole openness of the plateau be changed but far from having no/limited impact, all the White Cottages will see all of the polo pitches as well as the accompanying
buildings and practice areas, the car and truck parks, the vehicle movements and the players and horses. At night, we already get leakage from the current stables and school, but given the scale of the new stabling and the siting of them even closer to our properties, and the placement of the new entrance where cars and lorries will enter with their full beams on, this will increase the light nuisance and shine straight through into all of our bedroom windows.

The White Cottages will be the most impacted and to allow permission that would affect over 30% of the residents at best and at worst, 60% is too high a percentage. Far from this being ' visually self-contained and discreet', the area is highly visible and the plans are overbearing and commercialised and urbanised. It will impact over half of the current residents' ability to enjoy the visual and rural area where we live and work.

Such a proposal also leads to a loss of privacy as we will be overlooked throughout the site. I note that their proposed solution is:

To protect the privacy of these residents it is proposed to introduce various tree planting along the south western edge of the site. At Year 10, the residual effects are expected to diminish to negligible effects with views from the residential properties largely screened or substantially filtered.

Therefore, not only will residents have a loss of outlook and privacy immediately, but for 9 years the residents at the White Cottages have to look on to an urbanised, busy noisy development out of keeping with the landscape that has existed for centuries but by year 10 they swap that for something no better.

A 1m sapling is likely to grow 50cm per year meaning that by year 10, the cottages will be shaded by 6m trees blocking our sunlight, significantly reducing daylight to habitable rooms particularly on the ground floor and overshadowing first floor rooms and front

gardens. Therefore we will suffer the following losses over the next decade:

Loss of Privacy
Loss of Outlook
Loss of light

The solution proposed leaves the full time residents and homeowners in a worse position than we were before. The residents of White Cottages having already suffered a loss of outlook will now have to be aware that they can be seen in their bedrooms and bathrooms creating a loss of privacy, and in return for that privacy being reinstated, then the pay off is that there are trees only metres away from our properties which will lead to a loss of light and visual amenity and an
overshadowing of our living spaces creating an overbearing and oppressive living environment and impacting on our everyday life. As well as a material issue in regards to all of these, the proposal is surely also a potential breach of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act in regard to tall trees overbearing on to other properties.

More than that, it is changing the whole area of natural openness. - this is an area of horizontals not verticals and of openness that highlight the plateau not discrete parcels that hide it, and this is what makes it so rare. Being surrounded by 6m trees not only takes away our visual amenity and outlook it is also completely changing the open nature of the plateau with its low hedging and turning it into a darker, wetter area out of keeping with its special features.

LOSS OF OUTLOOK AND CHANGE OF LANDSCAPE FOR WALKERS AND VISITORS
I note that this solution of simply covering up the issues also is proposed for the PRoW, which will now be within 170m of the polo areas. Here, the plan is to screen it with hedgerow - again they have created an issue and in order to solve it, the solution is to 'hide' the issue and by doing so, intrinsically change the landscape to the detriment of the plateau itself and to walkers who had previously enjoyed the openness of the area.

I would also suggest that there is something fundamentally wrong in a plan if it relies on it having to be screened and this planned screening seems to be an unusual proposal, if, as they stated, that they believe that the change to the visual amenity 'is not considered to be adverse in nature'.

TRANSPORT AND SAFETY
The proposed planting against the boundary of Culham Lane leads to additional concerns that affect both residents and visitors. With leaf fall in autumn and reduced light from the tree foliage in summer this will create additional safety issues for drivers, the many cyclists who use this part of the Berkshire loop cycling route, walkers, horse riders going to the bridleways etc who already have to contend with a twisty, single track road. Reducing the light and visibility and
increasing the slipperiness of the surface, will lead to more accidents, plus the leaf drop will lead to the road drains blocking more readily leading to flooding and, again, risk of accidents plus put a financial drain on the Borough Council who will have to repair the road more often due to water damage leading to potholes.

IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

I understand that there is a duty to look at biodiversity issues for planning applications and I hope my first-hand knowledge of the area assists in understanding the importance of this for the species that live here.

The land provides food and sanctuary both to humans but also to a variety of species particularly those that use the grasslands on the opposite side of Culham Lane and the more intensively farmed land at Upper Culham Farm.

Both sides are frequented by deer, badgers, foxes, hedgehogs, partridges, pheasants, warblers, seed-eating birds, Barn Owls, little Owls, stoats, weasels, Red Kites, Buzzards, sparrow hawks, kestrels, swifts, housemartins, wagtails, jackdaws and the occasional hare, as well as more common birds and a whole host of insects and butterflies, moths and bees and a plethora of flora. We are fortunate that the trees in the plateau are few and far between and so there is less
impact from more predatory birds and creatures such as magpies and squirrels on the smaller birds, who then thrive. In winter, the stubble fields are home to migrating birds including several different species of geese and other migrant species who stop off here on their way to winter climes..

The change from arable land will lead to changes in available breeding, feeding , nesting and protective environs for all of these flora and fauna and their habitat, food and shelter will be destroyed.

You will be aware that 'common' British birds are declining https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-68099428 and while not all of these live here, many on the list do.

While the proposal talks about woodland in regard to the lack of semi natural habitats, it fails to recognise that not only are those vertical elements completely out of keeping with the open plateau but that currently the agricultural nature of the majority of the acreage works as a semi natural habitat (often in conjunction with the dense woodland at Bowsey Hill and the open grassland on the opposite side of the plateau) and the planting of trees is the antithesis of what is needed for the resident fauna who need open fields both grassland and agricultural or a mix of dense large scale woodland and open fields both grassland and agricultural, which they currently have and which would be removed if the planning is granted. The migratory birds who have relied on these fields for probably over 700 years as a place of safety, food and a place to roost for a brief interlude on their long journeys will now find none of this here and it will take generations for them to recompute where to stop and a loss of lives from not being able to rest and feed before travelling during that time.

This change in use will have a substantial effect on the flora and fauna of the area and its seasonal visitors which are already under pressure from increase in housing developments and human encroachment

NOISE AND LIGHT POLLUTION

This is a 'Tranquil and remote rural area, with a strong experience of dark skies, due to its relative inaccessibility'.

By increasing the accessibility and creating proper roads (rather than the current farm tracks) within the estate and by running a professional polo outfit from here then this will no longer be tranquil and remote and there is likely to be strong light pollution obliterating the current dark skies as well as increased groundwater where tarmac would lie over the permeable tracks and grass.

The plateau itself is unique in its character but also in the way that noise carries both from it and to it. For example, it is possible to see and hear fireworks in Reading on one side and towards High
Wycombe from the other side (c 9 miles as the crow flies). you can hear traffic on the main road (55-70 decibels) and the train horn (average mid-90s decibels) from the Henley to Twyford line (approximately 3 miles away), as well as being able to hear and identify music from Rewind South and the Henley Festival (and see and hear the fireworks). Thus when looking into the noise pollution, it must be noted that the noise not only will affect the residents of
Upper Culham but could feasibly affect those within a 3 mile radius - this would include Upper Culham, Cockpole Green, Warren Row, Aston, Wargrave and Henley on Thames and even the outskirts of Twyford and Knowl Hill. Therefore there is a larger population who would be
subjected to the increase in noise not just the residents in Upper Culham.

The game of polo is by its very nature noisy - horses galloping, crowds of spectators, mallets hitting the ball, team mates calling out to each other and dust being kicked up in summer. The siting of the polo establishment on the plateau means that sound carries and this will change the whole character of the area not just for residents but for the multitude of cyclists and walkers who escape to this area to be in the countryside surrounded by peace and quiet.

It is interesting to view the wording in the application for the certificate for lawful use from Youngs Farm and how this compares to this application

Here there are direct contradictions from one party who was aiming to get retrospective permission regarding a personal use non commercial polo pitch and who was at great pains to explain the amount of horses, the numerous daily horse and groom movements and the intensity of the exercising of the horses compared to this planning application for a highly commercial pitch which downplays all of these to stress that such things would hardly be noticeable to the residents.

Mr Young stated.
On the basis that the season is approximately twenty five weeks and that horses need to be exercised daily six days each week and played approximately three times each week you can see that the amount of times Polo is played or practised at Youngs Farm is a considerable amount

compared to this application:
Typically, the proposed Exercise Track would only be used twice a day for the quiet exercise of horses and only during the polo

season - between early March to the end of September. Therefore, any activities in this part of the site would be very infrequent and temporary.

As mentioned, this means that from areas of a slightly further distance to the proposed application, being the traffic noise between 50-75 decibels is audible, from approximately 1 mile 80db-100db from children on breaktime at the local primary school is audible, from approximately 2 miles, concerts of 110 decibels are audible, from approximately 3 miles, train horns in the mid 90s decibels are audible, and from approximately 9 miles, fireworks at 140 decibels are audible.

Looking at how noisy a polo establishment is, I found the following information and also include my own notes to this taken from information on the RNID website:

The average decibel level at a polo match is estimated to be in the mid-90-decibel range.
This level is similar to that of power tools and can be potentially harmful to hearing over time if sustained exposure occurs.

Polo practice can reach noise levels exceeding 85dB. This can be potentially harmful to hearing if sustained or where that noise is in conjunction with other everyday noises at a higher, lower or similar decibel level and will increase intensity, and time spent within this decibel range must be reduced or ear protective equipment provided.

The noise level of a cantering horse is within the range of 60-80 decibels. (NB: there are stalls available for up to 52 horses and in the event that all of them were being exercised at one time then each would produce 60-80 decibels for numerous hours every single day on a track metres away from the White Cottages and close to the other properties in Upper Culham, including those on Kentons Lane).
NB: the application states that the ponies will be exercised twice a day but fails to say how many will be exercised at each time or how long each exercise session will be. The noise of exercise will also include the noise of shouted instructions, conversations etc bringing the total decibels to a level more akin to 130 decibels per hour on the basis of one horse and two people. and higher than that if more horses and people and the intensity will also be increased thus leading to potential hearing damage

In effect, in the summer, the local residents will be subjected to noise at a minimum that is of the same level as a train horn , power tools or being at a childrens party and similar to levels found at rock concerts or even higher. The exposure to this will not be a brief interlude but will be for hours at a time for at least 6 or maybe even 7 days a week for 7 months of the year. This is without taking into consideration the noises that already exist in the area such as the traffic noise or the noise that each of us will generate simply going about our daily lives. Given that the intensity doubles for each 3db over 85db then unless we live our lives in silence, with our windows shut, not venturing into our gardens unless with ear protection then our exposure to the noise from the polo matches, practices and exercise has a high likelihood of damaging our hearing and our lives will be less rich living here. The noise will also be noticeable for residents potentially as far

away as Henley and
Wargrave.

As well as noise, surrounding residents may be subjected to increased dust from the hay and bedding of the horses as well as the dust kicked up when exercising, as well as exhaust fumes from the numerous
vehicles that will be servicing the site and which will arrive for match days as well as for everyday commuting. This will make living here unbearable if windows have to be kept shut in the summer to escape the dust, fumes and noise that will undoubtedly arise. and will be a health risk to anyone with breathing issues such as lung cancer, COPD, asthma etc.

I also have concerns about the forms of transport that will be used. I understand that helicopter travel to polo is popular and given that you do not need to have planning permission to land helicopters on your own land (subject to certain conditions) there would be no need to draw attention to it in the planning application. However, it is entirely foreseeable that for much of the summer, the skies above
Upper Culham, Cockpole Green and Warren Row and Crazies Hill will be filled with helicopters landing and taking off here. As they will be coming in to land/taking off, they will be low and the noise will be indescribable (in excess of 100 decibels per take off and landing and then between 85-100 decibels in flight), this is in addition to the noise being generated on the establishment during the same period and it could well see highs in excess of safe levels at peak times. This is an intolerable level for anyone yet the local residents will be subjected to this from March to the end of September on a regular basis. And this is on top of the noise being generated from the polo establishment in other areas, the traffic noise and our own noise.

As well as being a noise concern, there is also the loss of privacy for everyone in Upper Culham and Cockpole Green who will be fully visible in their gardens from the low flying helicopters. Additionally, there have been several helicopter accidents in the news, and this means that the local residents not only have to contend with the noise and privacy issues but also the risk of injury or death if there were a helicopter accident. It is a known fact that take off and landing are the most dangerous times, and the residents of Upper Culham, Aston, Remenham, Cockpole Green, Crazies Hill and
Warren Row could all be affected - as well as anyone travelling on Culham Lane or on the A4130. This again is a risk that may potentially be created where one was not before.

In addition, there is a likelihood of increased criminal activity given the high value enterprise. Not only will this have an impact on local residents who may find themselves victims of crime from opportun ists but in order to combat this, soon there will be CCTV, additional flood lights, barrier fencing etc. The beautiful and protected plateau will soon look like a prison and the people who will suffer most from this will be the people who live, work and visit the protected area of Upper Culham and its associated landscape and the landscape that has been minimally changed since the 13th Century will be lost forever.

VULNERABLE PERSON ISSUES

I do not know whether it is necessary for the planners or the licant to take into account any potential vulnerability issues that may arise from such a change in land usage. However, given the importance of inclusivity in society, it would seem sensible to consider that as a potential risk factor in the decision process.

By this I mean that there could be residents in the area who already suffer from hearing loss for whom this additional damage would cause permanent hearing loss, or babies and young children who have more sensitive hearing, or those who suffer from various conditions which would qualify as a disability that cause sensory processing with such people finding it hard to deal with the increase in noise levels particularly given that this will be on a daily basis (including weekends) particularly in summer months which means that they would need to either keep their windows shut all summer or wear noise cancelling headphones at all time, or may need to move home to escape from this. This may also apply to walkers and cyclists and riders who then need to avoid the area with the knock on economic effect for the cafes and pubs that cater to them. Additionally, there will those with mental health issues such as depression or anxiety who find solace in the quiet openness of the area and who will then no longer have access to something that benefits them and helps them cope with everyday life if they now find the area changed and noisy. I hope that you can give consideration as to how this could affect the vulnerable in our society and weigh up the benefit of the application to a small amount of people compared with the knock on detriment to a much larger amount of people.

THE IRRIGATION LAKE

I note that there is a proposed lake which has capacity for 67298m3 of water. To put that into context, that is the equivalent of roughly 27 Olympic size pools.

In terms of size, the irrigation lake is in size akin to a publicly owned reservoir.
This irrigation lake will be larger than the now defunct Chew Magna reservoir and just slightly smaller than the Hampton Sunnyside reservoir. I also note that in the flooding document with this application there are mention of ponds on several occasions. I also note that in the drawings the pump house does not correlate to the size put forward in the written application, and it seems a logical conclusion that these reports have been made using erroneous assumptions. This is borne out in the flooding report where it seems the information provided was based on their understanding that there would be 3 ponds. This makes the whole report unsafe to be relied on as it does not correlate to what will actually be on the land and what has been put forward in the application plans. I also note that while they discuss soakaways and drainage in depth, there seems to be no discussion about the safety, the size, the risks etc of this lake and its placement and capacity but only deals with its maintenance
schedule.

I cannot see where this water will be coming from in the first place given that its role is to be used to water the land area and no lake or pond exists that could fill it.

You will be aware that the area relies on the reservoir at Bowsey Hill which often leaks and leads to low water pressure. The demand on that to fill up an irrigation lake is immense if that is what is proposed.

Flooding from all types of water activity in this area is currently almost zero from tidal, river, and groundwater flooding risk (as confirmed in the application). Placing such a large lake here metres from White Cottages and the public road increases the flood risk for those areas exponentially in regard to ground water flooding. In effect, the proposal is not only changing the whole landscape character but it is again introducing a risk that is not currently
there.

From a personal perspective, my property is likely to then have the potential to flood where it never has before hand, and my insurance will then increase as the risk goes from zero risk to high risk due to the proximity of the lake to my and my neighbours properties and places an additional financial burden on us that should not have ever been applicable. I note that the placement of the lake and the potential flood risk is unlikely to have any consequences for Upper Culham Farm or the Corner Cottage in this regard and only affects properties outside the applicant's ownership.

You will see on the plans that the irrigation lake is, at its closest, only metres away from the public highway and from the White Cottages. You will also note from the contour lines that this area of land opes down towards the road and the cottages and therefore if water were to flood, it would follow gravity and flood downhill not back
into the applicants property but into mine, my neighbours and on to the public highway and down into Cockpole Green.

If the irrigation lake breaches or is damaged, there is the potential for an amount of water akin to a small public reservoir flooding out. Not only is there a flooding risk, but also a risk of death or injury in the event there was a major breach. Cyclists, walkers, horseriders and drivers could be swept up in it and injured or drowned and anyone and their pets in the downstairs of their properties could be drowned or injured or left homeless.

I attach the following article which, while concentrating on small reservoirs, clearly states the dangers of storing this amount of water.
https://britishdams.org/assets/archive/documents/Small%20Raised%20Res
e rvoirs%20Rev1.pdf

While the irrigation lake is not identical to these, what is clear is that holding water on a scale far less than is proposed here has caused serious damage to properties and roads as well as injuries and deaths. This does not seem to have been addressed.

Additionally, there is the highly foreseeable likelihood for frequent smaller scale road flooding if the ground is over saturated given the topography and soil strata and this would mean local residents being cut off - see issues on Culham Lane and seasonal flooding there that prevents certain cars getting through near the entrance to Park Place where there isn't even a lake close by.

Couple this with the blocked drains from leaf fall from the proposed planting and this magnifies the potential risk. If the road is flooded this will lead to
isolation for residents and deterioration of this road that is necessary for locals to use, some of whom are elderly and/or disabled, difficulties for the emergency services if using the road or to reach residents and would lead to an increase in road closures to repair the road necessitating long diversions and a financial detriment to
Wokingham Borough who is responsible for the public highways as well as increasing potholes that could lead to accidents for the many cyclists who use this road. It is entirely foreseeable that there will be an increase in flooding and an increased likelihood of injuries along this part of the road and, indeed, death.

While I accept that water can be beneficial to wildlife, the area already has a more modest irrigation lake at Youngs Farm and a large lake at Crazies Hall which are away from the roads and other properties. Wildlife uses these, and it is likely that they would also use this lake. While this sounds positive, it is likely to lead to numerous animals being run over, for deer to be crossing on an area of road which has limited visibility at this point and will lead to their deaths and injuries as well as motorists and cyclists being in accidents either by hitting them or by trying to avoid them. This will then lead to a decrease in those who had previously enjoyed using the amenities in the area as they would be put off by the increased danger for them and, again, leading to a knock on economic detriment to the area and to the health of local people who use this area to exercise. In effect, this lake is creating a hazard for humans and animals that was previously not an issue

The area proposed for the lake is chalk - a material known for its high porosity. This means that in order for the reservoir to be water tight not just at the date of planning but in future proofing it for climate change anomalies regarding rainfall/increase in water table etc, then manmade materials including concrete and plastics are likely to be needed to keep the water in. These are not biodegradeable and will stay in the soil for millennia unlike the chalk that naturally occurs. Furthermore, given the porosity of the chalk, this means that any break in the lining materials leads to an even greater potential of flooding which will increase the likelihood of the issues discussed above. In the event that the lake is not lined due to the current
water table levels, then this creates an even greater risk. We are all aware of climate change and that we face wetter weather, in effect, by placing a lake in an area that does not naturally have streams or watercourses or lakes is a recipe for disaster - there is a reason that they don't form here and tampering with nature is not a wise idea and again, creates yet another risk that wasn't there before.

Given that this irrigation lake unlike the smaller Chew Magna reservoir, is simply to water polo fields rather than forming any public benefit, this seems excessive - particularly in light of the size of other irrigation ponds that planning allowed in the past as well as being completely out of keeping with the natural landscape here. If this irrigation lake is above the natural ground level after the groundworks have taken place in whole or part, would this then mean it is subject to the Reservoirs Act 1975 and deemed a high risk reservoir with all the various compliance issues needed? If

building  it at ground level takes it out of the legislation it should be noted that it does not prevent it being high risk and I cannot see in the application any risk analysis on this point or any future proofing to  take into account rising water level and increased rainfall catchment or climatic changes that may influence how much water can be stored or the rise in the water table in the event of unseasonal rainfall amounts to prevent inundation of surrounding areas. The maintenance  schedule also seems to be too limited given the volume of water to be held here and the potential risks that entail.

The inclusion, the size and the placement of this lake given the positioning near residential properties and the public highway and on  soil known for its porosity and in a place where the natural fall is on to properties and the public highway  would unlikely be acceptable for a proposed above ground reservoir and although it may not be
caught by this legislation, I hope the planners can see this is poor planning , high risk and dangerous as well as  changing the character of the open plateau.

ECONOMICS
The applicant has put forward various economic reasons why a polo facility would be beneficial.
Unfortunately, sites of this size are nowadays unviable as small family farms and they can be viably farmed only by contracting out to a larger operator. Equestrian use maintains the integrity of the single estate, without the need to break it up, and generates ficant economic benefits.

As background, I specialise in advisory work for farmers and landowners and I can confirm that the acreage of agricultural land at Upper Culham Farm is perfectly viable to be run as a farming enterprise either in-hand, by using contractors, or under a farm tenancy.

For specific industry insight, please also see https://www.savills.co.uk/blog/article/326621/rural-property/changing - the-perception-of-farm-scales-and-sales.aspx of which I take extracts from below:

It is easy to get distracted by headline grabbing deals involving hyper-commercialised farms of 1000 acres or more. But these are not the norm. Indeed in Great Britain, year after year the sale of holdings sized 50 - 250 acres far outnumber larger farm sales, indicating the dominance of 'small farms' (by acreage) in the UK. Although an improving picture, the current farmland market is characterised by very low levels of stock. But of the farms which came to the open market last year, Savills Research found that 75 per cent  were holdings of 50-250 acres, in essence 517 apparent 'small' farms. Interestingly, 44 per cent of marketed holdings were 50-100 acres in size, a proportion which is only increasing according to Savills Research data.
So, do we therefore need to change our mindsets and the narrative? What actually is a 'small farm'? There are approximately 192,000 farms of various sizes and types in existence throughout the country. Only 20 per cent of these measure over 250 acres while around 50 per cent of all holdings are just 50 acres or under, with many being  family-run units.
Further information from the internet confirms profitability and